



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Audio comments from U.S. Attorney Todd Graves may be  
downloaded from the district's Web site at  
[www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow).*

## **FORMER SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT SENTENCED FOR EMBEZZLING MORE THAN \$850,000**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that the former superintendent of the Pattonsburg School District was sentenced in federal court today for embezzling more than \$850,000 from the school district.

**Ronnie Gene DeShon**, 51, of Gallatin, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Howard F. Sachs this morning to three years and six months in federal prison without parole. The court also ordered **DeShon** to pay \$854,699 in restitution. **DeShon** was the superintendent of the Pattonsburg, Missouri R-II School District from July 1, 2000, until he resigned effective Oct. 13, 2004.

“As a professional educator and the chief education leader in the community, **DeShon** should have made education his top priority,” Graves said. “Instead, **DeShon** took advantage of his position of public trust to victimize the students, parents and taxpayers of the Pattonsburg School District.”

On March 8, 2005, **DeShon** pleaded guilty to program fraud. **DeShon** admitted that he embezzled \$854,699 from the school district over a four-year period between Sept. 6, 2000, and Oct. 13, 2004.

“Although he may not be able to repay all of the money that was stolen, or repair the public trust that was violated, **Ronnie DeShon** is being held accountable for his actions,” Graves said. “Today’s sentencing falls within the Federal Sentencing Guidelines range, which is appropriate. But today’s crowded courtroom demonstrates that **DeShon’s** crime transcends the

financial loss in this case. How do you explain to the children in Pattonsburg classrooms that their role model stole money from their schools?

“Public money, more than 850,000 taxpayer dollars that should have gone for teachers and textbooks, was instead pocketed by **DeShon** and by his own admission squandered on gambling trips to horse-racing tracks around the country. This was a significant theft by any measure, even more because **DeShon** stole from a small, rural school district already operating on a tight budget. During the four years that **DeShon** was secretly stealing to feed his gambling habit, the school district struggled financially.”

Among **DeShon's** duties as superintendent was to insure that funds from the Missouri Securities Investment Program (MOSIP) were transferred into the school district's bank account at Bethany Trust Company. MOSIP is a funding mechanism for Missouri school districts. MOSIP receives federal and state funding for school districts, then disburses the funds to individual Missouri school districts. MOSIP transfers funds, which are used to cover operating expenses, into the Pattonsburg School District's individual MOSIP bank account.

In September 2000, Graves explained, **DeShon** faxed information regarding his personal bank account at Northwest Missouri Regional Credit Union to MOSIP officials, claiming that the account was a second account of the school district and directing that funds designated for the school district were to be sent to that credit union account. **DeShon** then sent orders via his office computer to MOSIP instructing it to wire transfer funds into his credit union account. MOSIP, not realizing that the account was actually **DeShon's** personal account, followed those instructions.

In order to conceal his fraud, **DeShon** generated false accounting entries to show the MOSIP account had the correct amount of funds; he also posted false accounting entries to show the account had earned \$60,000 in interest.

According to Graves, **DeShon's** theft was initially discovered when a \$20,000 payment to Bluebird Bus Company wasn't received. School officials learned that the check to Bluebird had been altered so that it was made payable to **DeShon**, and that there were other checks that were also suspicious. A few days later, on Oct. 13, 2004, school officials also learned that the district's MOSIP account, which should have contained a balance over \$800,000, in fact contained \$14. Later that day, **DeShon** visited the U.S. Attorney's Office and admitted his embezzlement. **DeShon** submitted his resignation at a school board meeting that night.

“Among the issues argued in court this morning was whether the defendant voluntarily came forward to disclose his crime at a time when discovery was unlikely,” Graves said. “We're pleased that the court agreed with us, in issuing this sentence, that **DeShon** knew his embezzlement scheme already had been exposed, which forced him to come clean.”

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Linda Parker Marshall. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

[www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow)